

1:1-2 Peter

The Bible introduces us to Peter in John chapter one. Peter's brother Andrew had heard John the Baptist say "Behold the Lamb of God" when Jesus walked by. Andrew went to find his brother and said, "We have found the Messiah!"

John 1:42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

And so Peter's given name was Simon, but Jesus said, "We're going to call you Rocky." Cephas (kay-FAS) means "rock" in Aramaic. The same word in Greek is PET-ros, or Peter.

Shortly afterwards, we read...

Matt. 4:18-20 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He *said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

From that day forward, Peter's life was never the same. Following Jesus meant experiencing such exciting things as walking on water (Matt. 14:29), casting out demons and healing diseases (Matt 10:1), being filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4), and becoming such a powerful preacher that he led three thousand people to Christ with one sermon (Acts 2:41), and two thousand with another (Acts 4:4).

But being a follower of Christ also meant great difficulty. He ended up in a sword fight with the servant of the high priest (John 18:10), the consequences of which made him so afraid that he denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75). He was arrested several times in his life (Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:4), and even flogged for his public preaching of Christ (Acts 5:40).

These difficulties made him able to relate to the church throughout the world that was suffering for their faith in Christ. As the apostle Paul wrote,

2Cor. 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

I believe that every difficulty I've ever experienced in my life was experienced for a reason. Many times, I find that my previous problems from past years allow me to minister to those who are enduring problems in the present. Peter is very well qualified to be writing this letter of ministry to the church.

Scattered Aliens

There were many aliens in the church by this time. Not from another planet, but from another place. You see, when Stephen was martyred, having been killed by the Council (Acts 7:54-60), the church began to be persecuted terribly.

Acts 8:1 ...And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

If you were a Christian, it was open season on you in Jerusalem. As a result, followers of Christ ended up all over the place - living as aliens, strangers in places that they were not from. They also found themselves living among Gentiles (1Pet. 2:12), people who not only didn't believe in Christ, but didn't even believe in the God of the Jews.

Chosen According To Foreknowledge

Christians have been "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God." What does that mean? It means that God chose them to be Christians - to be saved, to be His children.

This offends a lot of people. "You're talking about predestination! That God chose some people and rejected others! That teaching says that I don't have a free will!"

Actually, the teaching of God's foreknowledge is exactly what shows us how our free will and God's choice work perfectly together.

Remember, God is outside of time, because He created it.

2Pet. 3:8 ...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

Being outside of time, He sees the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). That's why He was able to tell the prophet Jeremiah,

Jer. 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

God knew who Jeremiah was before Jeremiah even was! He knows everyone's whole life story before they are even conceived! That means He knows who will believe in Him before they even exist. The apostle John tells us,

John 6:64 ...Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

That's why Paul could say,

Rom. 8:29-30 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

And so God knows our freewill choices in advance, and predestines us accordingly. We were chosen according to God's foreknowledge.

The Sanctifying Work Of The Spirit

"Sanctify," "sacred," "holy," and "saint" all come from a Greek word (hagios) that means to be set apart for God's exclusive use. When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit seals them (2Cor. 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). They are sanctified (Rom. 15:16; 1Cor. 6:11; 2Thes. 2:13; etc.) - their lives and bodies are meant for God's use only.

Paul told the Thessalonians,

2Th. 2:13 ...God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the

truth.

When the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you (1Cor. 3:16), you are set apart for God's use - this is the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

To Obey Jesus

When a person is sanctified by the Spirit, they are by definition supposed to obey Jesus. Remember the warning of Jesus,

Matt. 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."

Jesus also said,

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Paul said that God will render to each person according to his deeds. Those who do God's will inherit eternal life.

Rom. 2:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

And so we can see that it is not enough to simply say, "I believe in Jesus." We must obey Him. We must do God's will.

Sprinkled With His Blood

Being sprinkled with blood sounds like a really gross thing. But the majority of Peter's readers would understand the term clearly. Coming from Judaism, they understood that the sprinkling of sacrificial blood was what the high priest did to sanctify things and people (Exo. 24; 29; Lev. 1; etc.).

Grace And Peace In The Fullest Measure

Once Peter has clarified that he is writing to Christians, he says, "May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure." This tells us that there are varying amounts of grace and peace, and we should desire the maximum measure of them.

How much grace are you experiencing today? How much peace do you have? The opposites of grace are sin and law. The opposites of peace are fear and anxiety. God wants you to experience grace and peace in the fullest measures possible. That means no more walking in sin, no more walking in fear. No more following religious man-made laws, and no more being anxious about things in this life.

If you aren't experiencing the fullness of grace and peace, I encourage you to pray with one of the elders or pastors today. The Lord wants you to have these things in all fullness.